

# ***News and Information***

*from the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs*

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**Weekly Column by David McCollum, Director  
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## **Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs Sets a Record**

The Division of Consumer Affairs presented its annual report to the legislature last week, including news of a record. During the calendar years 1996 through 2000, the Division returned \$7,776,737 to individuals who had been the victim of unfair or deceptive business practices.

In 2000, the Division returned \$1,369,469 to consumers. This includes \$434,143 in restitution achieved with the assistance of the Office of the Attorney General. The Division thanks the Attorney General and his staff for their help in protecting Tennessee Consumers.

Problems with Debtor/Creditor relationships topped the list of complaints this year, as it has three of the last five years. With this in mind, the Division has made borrowing issues the focus of its consumer education efforts, including this year's National Consumer Protection Week. In conjunction with the Federal Trade Commission and other organizations, the Division spent the week of February 5-9 addressing predatory lending.

The Business Opportunities category became the focus of earlier consumer education efforts after appearing frequently at number one. The Division is proud to report that category is now absent from the top five for the second consecutive year.

Consumer education efforts in 2000 also included LifeSmarts and Project DETER. The LifeSmarts program prepares teens to shop responsibly and manage their finances wisely. Project DETER seeks to prevent fraud by education, training, and employment rackets.